

PENCILED INTO HISTORY: THE U.S. ARMY'S OCCUPATION OF KOREA AND LESSONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL ARTIST

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

PENCILED INTO HISTORY: THE U.S. ARMY'S OCCUPATION OF KOREA AND LESSONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL ARTIST, by MAJ Matthew D. Shifrin, 36 pages.

Operation BLACKLIST directed the occupation of Korea by U.S. forces following the surrender of the Japanese in World War II. The XXIV Corps was notified, with just two weeks notice, that they would lead the occupation and prepare the Korean people for independence. LTG John R. Hodge, the commander of the XXIV Corps transitioned his staff from preparing for an amphibious assault on Japan to an occupation mission in Korea. The staff's job was made more difficult due to the amount of planning time available, the lack of civil affair assets dedicated for Korea and the conflicting strategic political messages concerning the occupation. By leading his staff through the process, Hodge was able to overcome these obstacles and occupy Korea for three years until governance could be transferred to a legitimate Korean authority.

The present day operational artist can learn much from the experience of the U.S. Army and its occupation of the Korean peninsula. The preparation and the organization for occupation duty after hostilities end cannot be ad hoc in nature. Authoritarian regimes that typify nations belligerent to the United States extend their control throughout civil society. Once they are deposed through military action, a legitimate military power must replace them immediately and decisively. The U.S. Army can incorporate doctrinal changes that will allow for rapid transition to stability operations and avoid the power vacuum and confusion that is characteristic after the defeat of a regime.

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INTRODUCTION

On 15 August 1948, General John Hodge, Commander of the XXIV Corps, General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), Syngman Rhee, first president of South Korea and other dignitaries stood under a hot and humid sun in Seoul, Korea.¹ They watched the ceremony marking the transfer of authority from the United States Army Military Government Korea (USAMGIK) to the newly elected civilian government of Korea. With great fanfare and seemingly endless speeches, praise was reaped upon military and civilian leaders alike for the three years of cooperation that followed the surrender of the Japanese and the occupation of the Korean peninsula by United States Army forces of the XXIV Corps.² Squinting under the hot sun, one can only imagine the thoughts of Lieutenant General Hodge. He would most likely reflect on his time as an Army officer from his Regular Army commission in World War One to taking command of the 43rd Division, which was badly demoralized during difficult combat operations in the Pacific theater. He would remember how he rebuilt that unit into an effective fighting force, which would later go on to achieve success against the Japanese. He would no doubt remember the hard fighting he personally participated in as he “island hopped” across the Pacific, the men that had been lost under his command and his own wounds that he had received on Bougainville Island. He and others around him considered him a “soldier’s soldier,” adept at leading men in combat through his personal example and bravery.³ He had focused his entire military career on defeating the enemy in combat. In fact, just a few years before the

¹A biography of John R. Hodge has not been written. Many of the books concerning the occupation of Korea give a brief a description of the XXIV Corps Commander; they can be found in the bibliography of this monograph.

²Allan R. Millet, *The War For Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 160-162.

³United States Army Forces Korea. *History of the United States Army Military Government in Korea*. Period of September 1945-June 1946, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 12.

independence ceremony, he was preparing for the largest military operation of the entire war. The XXIV Corps was to take part in the invasion of the Japanese mainland in order to bring the war against the Japanese Empire to a close. Yet, in August of 1945, everything changed. Perhaps, he wondered what he did to deserve the unenviable task of occupying the Korean peninsula with limited time, guidance and resources. His thoughts returned to the staff's frantic planning in August of 1945, when the corps received orders to lead the occupation duty with just two weeks notice. The order that directed the occupation had the XXIV Corps penciled in by Supreme Allied Command planners due to the last minute changes made due to political considerations.⁴ His unit began an occupation that would be remembered by few Americans enamored with the fighting in the Pacific and European theaters, but would play a critical role in setting the conditions for another major military operation on the Korean peninsula in a few short years.

If the Korean Conflict is America's "forgotten war," the occupation of Korea by US Army forces following World War II is a distant memory. This occupation, originally named Operation BLACKLIST lasted from August 1945 until August 1948.⁵ These three years, while brief and long forgotten, would set the stage for the subsequent Korean conflict that would usher in a new era of warfare in the nuclear age. They would also illustrate the difficulties of transitioning to peace operations within a complex geo-political environment. Leading this transition would be Hodge. Ill prepared for assuming civilian control of South Korea, the combat tested XXIV Corps would have to quickly adapt from killing the enemy to governing a

⁴General Headquarters, US Army Forces Pacific, *Basic Outline for 'BLACKLIST' Operations to Occupy Japan Proper and Korea Surrender of Collapse*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 1945).

⁵Operation BLACKLIST was the plan for the occupation of Japan under the Commander, United States Army Pacific. The occupation of Korea was a subordinate plan within the operation that was referred to as BAKER-40. For simplicity, BLACKLIST will be an all-inclusive term.

population in order to hold together a fragile people struggling to find a national identity after decades of occupation and internal political strife.

The United States interest in the peninsula of Korea has a long history that would affect the approach in which it was to be governed. At the national strategic level, the United States had given implicit and explicit support to the independence of Korea through the Atlantic Charter and the Cairo Declarations. After forty years of Japanese occupation, the Korean people assumed that the arrival of U.S. Soldiers would facilitate the establishment of a free and independent Korea. The United States gave official governmental support to Korean (along with all other peoples) self-determination in August of 1941 with the issuance of the Atlantic Charter with Great Britain. The declaration states that all peoples possess the right of self-determination, which includes choosing a representative government.⁶ The Atlantic Charter was seen as the first official declaration that would allow for the Korean people to be rid of Japanese occupation. During the Cairo Conference in November of 1943, the United States issued their explicit policy regarding Korea after the Japanese defeat: “The aforesaid Three Great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.”⁷ It is the language of declaration that would cause confusion amongst both the American occupiers and the Korean people in September 1945. Either through a problem with translation or the fact that Koreans finally saw an end to an almost forty year occupation, many in exile and on the peninsula saw this declaration as an immediate granting of freedom upon Japanese surrender. No matter the cause, US political and military leaders were not prepared to

⁶ Social Security Administration, “Atlantic Charter,” 14 August 1941, <http://www.ssa.gov/history/acharter2.html> (accessed 24 March 2014).

⁷ Yale Law School, “Cairo Declaration,” *Cairo Conference 1943*, 27 November 1943, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/cairo.asp> (accessed 24 March 2014).

offer immediate independence upon arrival in Korea.⁸ The final agreement that dealt with the official United States policy on Korea resulted from the Yalta Conference in February of 1945. This agreement, involving the US, Russia and Great Britain decided on a trusteeship in order to govern Korea after World War II.⁹ U.S. State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee planners chose the 38th parallel as the now infamous dividing line between the Soviet and U.S. forces. Aside from being a generally arbitrary line, this decision failed to take into account economic, agricultural and industrial capacities and would cause difficulties throughout the occupation.¹⁰

Due to the strategic situation in the Pacific theater at the end of the war, the amount of time allotted to the planning for the occupation of Korea was minimal. The events leading up to the surrender of the Japanese also paint a picture of the confusion of the allies concerning the terms of surrender and what the post World War II Pacific region would look like. The issue of Allied prisoners of war (POW) held by the Japanese under horrific conditions also weighed heavily on the minds of decision makers in Washington. When the Japanese finally surrendered in accordance with the conditions established in the Potsdam Declaration¹¹ of 26 July 1945, it caught both political and military leaders off guard.¹² The United States government and its allies

⁸E. Grant Meade, *American Military Government in Korea* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1951), 44.

⁹Michael Sandusky, *America's Parallel* (Alexandria: Old Dominion Press, 1984), 143-150. Refer to this source for an excellent and concise overview of the Yalta Conference and Roosevelt's decision to pursue a trusteeship for the peninsula.

¹⁰Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korea War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 120-122. This source provides an overview of the decision to choose the 38th parallel. The decision was made in a time-constrained environment within the organization of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC). While many versions of the events exist, the resultant decision and its effect are not in dispute.

¹¹"Potsdam Declaration," Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender, 26 July 1945, <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c06.html> (accessed 24 March 2014).

¹²Ronald H. Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and The Battle For Postwar Asia* (New York: Random House, 2007), 9.

could no longer ignore the Korean issue of independence once the Japanese capitulated. Understandably, the focus for military and political leaders was on China and Japan throughout the war. The U.S. did not direct precious planning resources towards the issue of Korea until shortly after the surrender of the Japanese Empire. Strategically, Korea was to be independent, but a Soviet controlled Korea was unacceptable to the United States Government.¹³ The Soviet entrance into the war against Japan on 9 August 1945 and their subsequent success set the conditions for an occupied Korea in direct conflict with the interest of the United States in the Pacific. By 24 August, Soviet troops had occupied Pyongyang and were poised to move into the southern portion of the peninsula. At an operational level, the presence of Japanese troops within Korea and the possibility of Japanese camps holding POWs also necessitated a rapid occupation and establishment of governmental control. American military forces, which just a few weeks prior were planning for an opposed amphibious landing of Japan, now found themselves tasked with governing a country they knew nearly nothing about.

Making the tasks assigned to Hodge all the more difficult was the fact that the United States Government and War Department knew little about the history or people of Korea. The affect on the psyche of the Korean people resulting from the forty year Japanese occupation presented a challenge for Hodge. His organization would have to possess a deep understanding of that psyche in order to hold the nation together and set the conditions for independence. The political system implemented by the Japanese, which controlled the Koreans throughout the occupation would also need to be dismantled and replaced. The presence of Communist Soviets in the north and the return of exiled political leaders vying for power complicated the political situation that Hodge faced.¹⁴ Finally, the economic systems that were present were not adequate

¹³Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 138.

¹⁴United States Department of State, *Korea 1945-1948: A Report on Political Developments and Economic Resources with Selected Documents*, Publication 3305, Far Eastern

to support a free and independent country. The agricultural capabilities of the country were poorly developed and not prepared for the repatriation of Korean refugees. Hodge and his men faced a “wicked problem” resulting from compounding political, social and military problems.¹⁵ How did Hodge and the men of XXIV Corps overcome these seemingly insurmountable obstacles to successfully occupy, govern and transfer governmental authority to Korea?

Within the framework of the strategic, political, social and economic situation in Korea, several obstacles existed that degraded the ability of the US to successfully achieve the objective of occupation, governance and ultimately independence of the republic of Korea. A unit, previously focused on destroying the enemy, now found itself as an occupier and builder of a nation. Beyond the obvious difficulties of such a task, Hodge had to overcome multiple impediments as the commander of the unit tasked to solve the “Korean problem.” The three major obstacles facing the operational artist were the lack of planning guidance, the employment of scarce military governance assets in Korea and conflicting strategic guidance in order to achieve success on the ground.

PLANNING

In 1945, U.S. Army planning doctrine provided a framework and a methodological process for commanders and their staffs to plan and prepare both combat and routine orders. Field Manual 101-5 distilled the planning process into four distinct steps and directed staffs to follow

Series 28 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 1948). This report by the US State department provides an in depth look at the domestic political developments within Korea. The fracturing of political parties within the country only further complicated XXIV’s Corps attempts control the country while setting the conditions for independence.

¹⁵T.C. Greenwood, “War Planning for Wicked Problems,” *Armed Forces Journal* (1 December 2009): 1, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/war-planning-for-wicked-problems/> (accessed 17 March 2014). “Wicked Problem” refers to an ill structured problem that an organization may face. It describes the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan where a military organization is faced with an unpredictable enemy and tasks that fall outside their intended organization and structured.

them in a logical sequence. First, and perhaps most critical, is the commander's ability to understand the environment by making an "estimate of the situation." At the conclusion of his estimate, the commander creates a plan in order to solve the particular problem that his unit faces. Then, he and his staff convey how to employ subordinate elements in order to execute the decided plan. Finally, the commander supervises the implementation of his plan to ensure compliance with his orders and vision.¹⁶ Planning in 1945 was a commander centric process, with the use of staffs as enablers to ensure mission success within the intent of the senior leader. Most members of a military planning organization such as this one would say that throughout this process, the scarcest resource made available to them is that of time. For Hodge and his staff, that axiom was especially true in 1945 as it is today. Hodge and his staff's ability to develop a coherent plan for occupying Korea was dependent on several factors: his understanding of the problem he faced on the peninsula, changing the organization of the corps from a combat force to an occupation force and the logistical requirements to move three divisions from multiple locations within the region to the peninsula of Korea.

The timeline leading up to the landing of the initial elements of the XXIV Corps main body in Korea on 8 September 1945 must be studied in order to truly appreciate the planning obstacles the corps staff faced. While the bulk of the planning for BLACKLIST at the General Headquarters of the United States Army Forces Pacific, occurred in May of 1945, the main effort for all forces within the Pacific was the opposed amphibious invasion of Japan, expected in the event that the Japanese did not accept the unconditional surrender.¹⁷ Despite the work on

¹⁶Department of the Army, FM 101-5, *Staff Officers' Field Manual: The Staff and Combat Orders* (Washington, DC: War Department, 1940), 2.

¹⁷Department of the Army, *Reports of General MacArthur: MacArthur in Japan The Occupation: Military Phase*, Volume I Supplement (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 2.

BLACKLIST during the late spring and early summer of 1945, the focus of the plan was mainly on occupation of Japan, with a “be prepared to mission” of occupying Korea.¹⁸

Several political developments rapidly accelerated the timeline to transition from an attack on Japan and Korea to an occupation. The Potsdam declaration, issued on 26 July 1945, signaled the intentions of the Allies to remove the Japanese from the territories in Korea and Manchuria. After the U.S. employment of atomic weapons on Japan and the subsequent Soviet declaration of war, the United States Army Forces Pacific knew the surrender would be forthcoming. MacArthur’s staff shelved the plans for the invasion of Japan and BLACKLIST became the focus in the Pacific. MacArthur directed his staff in Manila to activate the subordinate commands to prepare them for implementation of BLACKLIST and a post war Pacific.¹⁹

For Hodge, the time leading up to the notification of the implementation of BLACKLIST was one of uncertainty. In July 1945, his staff was a part of the Tenth Army under command of General Joseph Stillwell. In late July 1945, the XXIV Corps had just completed the invasion of Okinawa, Operation ICEBERG. Upon completion of the operation, the XXIV Corps reorganized and reconsolidated from casualties and losses suffered during the Okinawa invasion. While they conducted refit, the XXIV Corps staff was working closely with the higher headquarters of the Tenth Army in preparation for Operation DOWNFALL, the invasion of Japan. It was not until 12 August 1945 that the Tenth Army and the XXIV Corps would even consider the Korean peninsula with any type of interest.²⁰ Further compressing the timeline of the XXIV Corps staff in this regard, was the last minute decision by General MacArthur to replace the Tenth Army with the XXIV Corps as the senior headquarters. It was not until 13 August 1945 that MacArthur made

¹⁸Cummings, *Origins of the Korean War*, 122.

¹⁹Department of the Army, *Reports of General MacArthur*, 12.

²⁰United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of United States Armed Forces in Korea*, Part I (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 8.

the decision to replace GEN Stilwell as the commander. The Tenth Army Chief of Staff, Major General Frank D. Merrell announced the decision at a staff meeting two days later on 15 August 1945.²¹

Now Hodge faced the difficulties of planning for the occupation with several critical pieces of information missing. The success or failure of BLACKLIST would wholly depend on his staff's ability to overcome these shortfalls. The lack of strategic intelligence on Korea was particularly troubling. The entire focus of U.S. forces in the Pacific had been the defeat of Japan and most recently, the invasion of the main island of the nation. The lack of organization of the XXIV Corps for military governance duties was another issue facing Hodge. The XXIV Corps was organized to perform high intensity combat operations. It performed well in Okinawa and spent the previous sixty days preparing for an amphibious invasion of Japan. Finally, there were major logistical hurdles that faced the corps' staff; the units designated to support the occupation of Korea were scattered throughout the area of operations. An occupation date of 11 September 1945 compounded all of these issues.²² Adding to the confusion of the staff, AFPAC moved up the date of BLACKLIST's execution after the surrender of Japan. The XXIV Corps entered Korea earlier than originally planned due to the Soviets' rapid movement from Manchuria into the peninsula.

In order to understand the problem that he faced, Hodge and his staff took near-heroic measures to find out what they could about the country of Korea. Primarily, there was a lack of geographic intelligence of the peninsula (in particular the landing sites), an understanding of the

²¹United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of the United States Army Military Government in Korea*, Part II, Period of September 1945-June 1946 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 22.

²²"Basic Outline Plan for BLACKLIST Operations to Occupy Japan Proper and Korea After Surrender or Collapse, 8 August 1945," *World War II Operational Documents* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Research Library), N11620-A.

political situation awaiting them within the country and the status and disposition of the Japanese forces that remained on the peninsula. The processes and innovative solutions the staff used to answer these questions for the commander illustrates the adaptability of the organization and the lack of priority that was placed on Korea by higher headquarters in the Pacific.

The corps intelligence section used two sources in an attempt to solve the lack of geographical understanding of the Korean peninsula and the selection of possible amphibious landing sites. First, it was in possession of the *Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Study of Korea*, Chapter 75. This document was the corps' sole reference piece for both strategic and ground intelligence for Korea. While it did provide a general understanding of the strategic level of analysis of the peninsula, the maps were very rudimentary and required additional means to fill the intelligence gap that existed. In order to fill that gap, the corps staff resorted to aerial reconnaissance flights over the peninsula.²³ The Allies conducted aerial reconnaissance of Korea earlier in the war during operations in China. From the Chinese mainland, Allied forces took extensive photographs of the peninsula as recently as October of 1944. In a cruel twist of bureaucratic fate, the negatives of these missions were in Washington and did not arrive to Okinawa until a few days before the beginning of the amphibious movement to Korea.²⁴ In an attempt to gain an understanding of the area of operations, XXIV intelligence staff resorted to informal agreements with the Army Air Corps' 28th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron based in Okinawa. P-38 and F-5 Lightning aircraft flew reconnaissance missions over the peninsula in order to allow the staff to plan for the actual amphibious and ground movement of personnel upon arrival to Korea.²⁵ Two missions on August 18th and August 25th provided critical ground intelligence to the planners of the XXIV Corps in order to successfully plan and execute the

²³United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of USAFIK*, 24.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Spector, *In The Ruins of an Empire*, 150.

amphibious landings at Seoul. The corps conducted leaflet missions in the beginning of September, just before initial landing. These missions had two objectives: provide the Koreans and Japanese instructions for the impending U.S. landings and to gain additional information concerning the geography and infrastructure of critical areas throughout the peninsula.²⁶ Of note is the nature of the relationship, or more precisely the lack thereof, between the corps and the reconnaissance squadrons. The status of command responsibility of these flights was constantly in question and the priorities of the XXIV Corps were not in line with that of SCAP, which was focused mainly on the Japanese mainland. The informal agreements between the Corps G-2 and the reconnaissance personnel were absolutely instrumental in receiving the intelligence in time for the embarkation of forces.

The status and disposition of Japanese forces in Korea was also an unknown to the corps Staff. According to the order for BLACKLIST, over 270,000 Japanese troops were stationed on the peninsula. As the G-2 continued to develop its intelligence throughout August, the number was actually raised another 100,000, in addition to reports that a large Japanese Special Forces unit was present on the peninsula. The disposition of these forces was also another question as nearly all of the intelligence estimates coming from SCAP headquarters was unable to separate which Japanese units were located north of the 38th parallel and which ones would be in the corps' area of responsibility.²⁷ By the end of August approximately one week before the landing, the Corps G-2 (intelligence section) had a geographical breakdown of Japanese units in Korea to give Hodge a better idea as to which specific units they would face.²⁸ Incredibly, Hodge did not know if they would have to fight their way onto the peninsula, or if they would be welcomed by a

²⁶United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of USAFIK*, 70.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸Korea Order of Battle, "XXIV Corps G-2, 28 August 1945," *WWII Operation Reports 1940-48, XXIV Corps*, RG 407, Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, Box 4711.

Japanese force complying with the recently signed surrender. BLACKLIST called for landings in strength in the event of local opposition.²⁹ Hodge and his staff fought the Japanese across the Pacific and most recently at Okinawa and they knew how fanatical an enemy the Japanese Soldier could be. Indeed, his fears were justified by the fact that several isolated units of Japanese Soldiers were found decades after the war.³⁰ The focus on the enemy, while understandable, did not lend itself for the staff to focus on the governance and civilian problems that would prove much more difficult in the coming years.

In order to fill this human intelligence gap, the G-2 resorted to limited interrogation operations from their headquarters in Okinawa. The XXIV G-2 staff debriefed captured Korean prisoners of war that were fighting for the Japanese Army during the Ryukus campaign. The 700 prisoners of war provided very little information during the interrogations in mid to late August; reports from the XXIV Intelligence Section state that the men had been impressed into service several years ago and had not been to Korea since. Additionally, as the XXIV Corps Operation Section focused on the amphibious landing in Seoul, none of the Koreans had been to the anticipated landing sites, nor could they provide the needed intelligence on the intentions of the surrendering Japanese.³¹ The corps G-2 reports from the time do not state if interrogators explored civil considerations of the Korean population with these POWs. Ironically, the best human intelligence that the G-2 received seemed to come from the Japanese themselves and shaped Hodge's understanding of the situation. XXIV Corps finally made contact with the Japanese on 31 August 1945. They had attempted to reach Seoul by radio for over two days, but a typhoon earlier in the week (which was also responsible for a delay to the amphibious landing

²⁹Operation BLACKLIST, 7.

³⁰Robert D. McFadden, "Hiroo Onoda, Soldier Who Hid in Jungle for Decades, Dies at 91," *New York Times*, 17 January 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/18/world/asia/hiroo-onoda-imperial-japanese-army-officer-dies-at-91.html?_r=0 (accessed 18 January 2014).

³¹United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of USAFIK*, 21.

operation) had destroyed much of the communication equipment near Seoul. LTG Yoshio Kozuki, the Japanese Korean Army commander, sent the first message to the future occupiers of Korea. In it, he stated how Communist sympathizers within Korea were creating a precarious situation. He stated how he was “eagerly awaiting” the arrival of the Americans.³² The effect this message had on Hodge and therefore his staff cannot be understated. The Soviet presence on the peninsula moved up Hodge’s entry into Korea by over two weeks. Further, the contact with the Japanese in Korea also confirmed the Red Army had in fact moved below the 38th parallel and were responsible for “molesting” local officials and taking supplies.³³ His former enemy confirmed his mistrust of the Communists. Where better to get advice on occupying a people than from those they had successfully occupied them for the past four decades? Unfortunately, Hodges’ reliance on the advice and expertise of the Japanese would create difficulties in the months and years ahead.

Reorganization of the corps would be necessary in order to execute the assigned tasks of BLACKLIST. MacArthur’s headquarters, Army Forces in the Pacific (AFPAC) made the reorganization more difficult by constantly revising the amount of units and troops assigned to the corps. From August 11, 1945 to September 1, 1945, AFPAC revised the troop list no less than fourteen times; XXIV Corps had 135,000 troops assigned in order to execute BLACKLIST.³⁴ While the total number of troops may have seemed sufficient for BLACKLIST, it was the types of troops that populated the corps that consumed Hodge and his Staff. The most critical shortage was the lack of military governance teams assigned to XXIV Corps. While historians do not know why the XXIV Corps lacked these critical personnel, it is debatable as to whether or not a full contingent of military governance personnel would have been helpful. As had been the theme

³²Cummings, *Origins of the Korean War*, 127.

³³United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of USAFIK*, 59.

³⁴Ibid. 26.

throughout the war in the Pacific, the Allies focused all their efforts on the defeat of the Japanese empire and the occupation of Japan proper. In fact, it was against policy to teach Korean at the military government school in Charlottesville, Virginia.³⁵ Even so, the XXIV Corps staff made changes within the corps in order to facilitate BLACKLIST. Most critically, the reassignment of Tenth Army Anti-Aircraft Artillery Command from Tenth Army to the corps to act as the headquarters for the not as yet established military governance command.³⁶ While this “in lieu” of unit did not have any military governance assets assigned to them, it did provide structure and organization for the staff to focus governance activities and planning. It also allowed a single headquarters to receive and employ incoming personnel during the occupation. This pooling of talent was most likely implemented in order to lead to an emergent property of expertise; the sum total of individual knowledge of Korea, would lead to organizational understanding of the problems that lie ahead.

Reorganization within the subordinate units assigned to the staffs was also required prior to the occupation. The 40th Infantry Division was given even less time than the XXIV Corps between notification of the mission and landing in South Korea. In fact, AFPAC notified the 40th Division on 22 August of their reassignment to the XXIV Corps, effective one week earlier.³⁷ The Divisions under the corps knew that trained military government teams would not be available until approximately six weeks after the start of the operation. In order to fill the gap, the division took teams out of combat formations and provided hasty training on their expected duties and responsibilities. While the organization of these teams varied throughout the corps, in general they consisted of fifteen men (five officers and ten enlisted Soldiers). These men were selected

³⁵Spector, *In The Ruins of Empire* 150.

³⁶Donald Boose, Jr., “Portentous Sideshow: The Korean Occupation Decision,” *Parameters* (Winter 1995): 8.

³⁷United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of USAFIK*, Chapter 6, 59.

based upon their civilian occupations prior to enlistment in the Army. Along with the governance teams, the corps supplied all training to the Soldiers. The classes focused on the cultural nuances of Korea and the geography of the peninsula.³⁸ The XXIV Corps transferred what little information that it had on this seemingly alien culture to the ground troops that would have daily interaction with the South Korean people. Similar to the lack of civil affairs troops, the corps lacked enough military police assets to conduct the expected law and order enforcement functions required in Korea. XXIV Corps reorganized their enabler units from pure combat focus to occupation duties. Both the XXIV Corps Artillery and the 137th Anti Aircraft Artillery Group would transition one battalion of Soldiers to military policemen. This change was in name only as the parent units had only two weeks to train the troops to conduct the law enforcement tasks.³⁹

The XXIV Corps was able to reorganize into an occupation force before the initiation of BLACKLIST and would continue to do so throughout the operation. The corps' lack of civil affairs and military police troops led to ad hoc organizations and the usage of Soldiers outside their normal duties. The corps' assignment of the Tenth Army Anti-Artillery Command headquarters as military government command and control and the reorganization of subordinate units were critical in posturing the unit to successfully execute BLACKLIST.

Finally, the XXIV Corps staff had to overcome the logistical problems of transporting a corps headquarters with three divisions to the Korean Peninsula. The AFPAC had re-designated the XXIV corps as a replacement for Tenth Army mainly due to proximity of the force to the country. The subordinate units assigned to the XXIV Corps for phase I of the occupation consisted of two combat divisions and a variety of combat support forces numbering 86,000 men and 17,000 vehicles. In phase II an additional combat division would follow as well as multiple

³⁸Ibid., 4.

³⁹XXIV Corps Field Order 55, 28 August 1945, *WWII Operation Reports 1940-48*, XXIV Corps, RG 407 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records), Administration Box 4756.

support units. The total number of men scheduled for the occupation would total 135,000.⁴⁰ The fear that there would be a rapid collapse of Japanese control and a Soviet force that was postured to fill the resultant vacuum was a major planning factor for the U.S. War Department and the Allied Powers in the Pacific.⁴¹ Time was of the essence and there was constant tension between the ability to move troops and conduct an amphibious landing and earliest date that it could be accomplished. Bad weather only further served to increase this tension during the lead up to the actual occupation. According to BLACKLIST, transportation support would come from elements already designated in a supporting role for OLYMPIC to the “maximum extent possible.”⁴² There was no plan for any movement of troops to the Korean peninsula that they could maximize. The job of moving the corps was assigned to the 7th Fleet Amphibious Force, of which the commander informed Hodge that he did not have enough assets to move both of his divisions onto the peninsula by the projected landing date of 27 August 1945.⁴³ While little consolation for the corps staff, the lack of available shipping was not only confined to the Korean occupation forces. BLACKLIST was plagued with transport difficulties and necessitated the movement of the start of the operation in both Korea and Japan later by one week.⁴⁴

Hodge and his staff faced a daunting task when SCAP redirected them from an invasion of Japan to the occupation of Korea. They were further challenged when they were ordered to take full operational control of the Korean occupation a mere thirty days from the scheduled entry date. MacArthur removed the Tenth Army from Korea to keep GEN Stilwell away from the

⁴⁰*Tentative Troop List by Type Unit for “Blacklist” Operations, 8 August 1945*, World War II Operational Documents (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Research Library), N11621.

⁴¹Cummings, *Origins of the Korean War* 122.

⁴²Operation BLACKLIST, 20.

⁴³United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of USAFIK*, Chapter 1, 29.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 30.

Chinese mainland for purely political reason; the XXIV Corps replaced them due to geographical considerations. These last minute changes presented three critical obstacles that the staff had to overcome against a backdrop of limited time. The staff had to gain an understanding of the problem facing them on the peninsula, the logistical requirements of moving men and material from within the region to the country of Korea and finally reorganizing a combat unit for the nebulous task of occupation duty. Critical to this planning process and resultant reorganization was the leveraging of military governance assets from throughout U.S. forces in the Pacific. Hodge and his staff would soon be employing their re-organized corps into a complex environment that they had little time to fully understand.

EMPLOYMENT OF CIVIL AFFAIRS ASSETS

The XXIV Corp's rapid deployment of civil affairs troops (or combat troops tasking with military governance tasks) was critical to the success of the occupation. Having conducted the reorganization of his unit from war fighting to occupation, Hodge now faced the challenge of employing his limited assets effectively.⁴⁵ The first aspect of effective employment was the speed in which he could get his combat and military governance troops onto the peninsula and into the outlying provinces. The lack of shipping assets delayed the movement of his troops onto the peninsula. Once on the ground, Hodge's men struggled to occupy the peninsula during the first critical weeks of the operation. Another problem Hodge faced was his reliance on tactical troops for military governance during the initial phases of BLACKLIST. These men were not trained, prepared or equipped for such a mission and were in dire need of military governance support, which would not be available for up to six weeks following the landing at Seoul. Finally, Hodge was conducting governance under the constraints of his higher headquarters. As the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Pacific, MacArthur had a very clear vision in his mind for

⁴⁵By 31 December 1945, XXIV Corps was short almost 20 percent of assigned military governance officer personnel and 50 percent of enlisted personnel.

how the occupation of Japan would proceed. Despite the cultural differences and the nature of the Korean situation, the XXIV Corps applied the same occupation policies to their operation.⁴⁶

The one thing Hodge and his staff needed more of, was time. Unfortunately, of all the resources available to a commander, the unrelenting march of time is in many instances the most desired and the scarcest. The lack of time would exacerbate the political and social difficulties that Hodge faced in South Korea. As discussed above, the Koreans desperately wanted their independence and the removal of the Japanese from the peninsula and from governmental positions. Any failure by the XXIV Corps to provide a “stop-gap” for the transition from Japanese colonial rule to Korean self-rule could be catastrophic. From a security stand point, the threat against Japanese personnel and equipment was high. The Korean people were wholly dependent on a Japanese controlled and centralized food distribution at the provincial level. The issue of food distribution would also become a major issue if the XXIV Corps did not establish themselves early and decisively throughout the country.⁴⁷ Mr. Merrill Benninghoff, the assigned State Department advisor to Hodge, also understood the necessity for a rapid occupation in order to stabilize the country and ensure successful transition to self-rule.⁴⁸ The movement of his forces east from Seoul into the rest of the provinces had to be rapid. In a letter to MacArthur’s staff on 13 September 1945, Hodge expressed his concern over the speed of occupation and necessity of tactical troops to conduct military governance tasks.⁴⁹ Later in September, when the 96th Division was re-tasked from the occupation mission after their arrival had been further delayed, Hodge again expressed his frustration with and the need for additional troops during the most

⁴⁶The Koreans were not a conquered people as the Japanese were and saw themselves not as occupied, but as the rightful governors of their state.

⁴⁷Korea, 1945 to 1948: A Report on Political Developments, 25.

⁴⁸Boose, “Portentous Sideshow: The Korean Occupation Decision,” 7.

⁴⁹United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of The USAFIK*, Chapter 6, 8.

critical time of the occupation: “delay in arrival of a third division will seriously impede orderly assumption of government control.”⁵⁰ Clearly, Hodge and his staff knew that they began the occupation at a distinct disadvantage. The reality of not having enough troops at the right place at a critical time presented an operational problem. The solution to which, would necessitate a deviation from the military governance doctrine and a reprioritization of assigned tasks from MacArthur as the Supreme Commander Allied Powers.

BLACKLIST tasked the XXIV Corps to conduct multiple tasks upon arrival into Korea. The primary tasks dealt with the surrendering Japanese troops, their accompanied military equipment and their removal from the peninsula and back to Japan.⁵¹ Further down on the list of priorities, was the military governance of the Korean nation and its people. While certainly not an afterthought, the tactical commanders of the three divisions under XXIV Corps were focused on the combat tasks of accepting surrender and preparing for possible combat with the vanquished Japanese should they refuse the orders from Tokyo to abide by the terms. With this in mind, the corps staff attempted to limit the use of combat troops in governance. When their intervention in local governance was required, the staff attempted to contain them to what they referred to as “operational military governance.”⁵² The second level of military governance was territorial and was to be conducted solely by military government teams that were arriving in theater at a frustratingly slow pace. From Seoul to the outlying provinces, tactical units found that government at all levels had been “reduced to a phantom.”⁵³ Basic services, historically, provided by a totalitarian Japanese system staffed by both Korean and Japanese civilians were non-

⁵⁰United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of The USAFIK*, Chapter 6, 29.

⁵¹Operation BLACKLIST, 13.

⁵²United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of The USAFIK*, Chapter 6, 42.

⁵³Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 152.

existent. The task of “maintain(ing) order” included the restoration of these critical services and doing so fell under the umbrella of tactical military governance out of necessity.⁵⁴

In accordance with civil affairs doctrine at the time, combat personnel and military governance personnel responsibilities were to be kept distinctly separate in order to prevent untrained combat units from interacting with non combatants and retaining combat power for future operations. While tactical units may be used as “organs” of military government if the possibilities of the resumption of hostilities are remote, they are to be limited in scope to greatest extent possible.⁵⁵ The reality during the occupation in Korea (and Japan for that matter) did not provide for such luxuries. His men faced three types of problems throughout the country during the initial occupation of Korea: political, economic and security.⁵⁶ The first two issues required pure military governance teams, while the third issue of security would benefit from a combination of tactical employment of combat troops and military governance solutions. In the absence of military governance support and with only an annex from the Field Order 55 to guide them, the men of the tactical divisions were at a distinct disadvantage.⁵⁷ As discussed above, compounding these issues was the speed in which the Korean people expected independence.

The confusing chain of command between both the civil affairs and operational units was another effect of using tactical troops in military governance. At the national level, there was a distinct separation between occupation duties by tactical troops and governance duties by civil affairs personnel of the United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK). A different situation

⁵⁴XXIV Corps Field Order 55, Annex 9 (Military Governance) September 7, 1945, *WWII Operation Reports 1940-48*, XXIV Corps, RG 407 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records, 1945), Administration Box, 4756.

⁵⁵Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 27-5, *Basic Field Manual and Military Government* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), 10-11.

⁵⁶United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of the The USAFIK*, Chapter 6, 43.

⁵⁷Field Order 55.

existed at the provisional and district levels within the country. Hodge established a military governor, Major General Archibald V. Arnold, to oversee the civil functions that were necessary in order to support the initial tasks of the tactical units of accepting Japanese surrender, repatriation of Korean refugees and the preservation of life and property during the transition.⁵⁸ While the focus of the XXIV Corps and later the USAMGIK was at the national level, a relatively small group of military governance teams was sent to establish provincial governmental functions. This was done in conjunction with the tactical units from the 7th Division and 40th Division that were conducting occupation and security missions throughout the country.⁵⁹ The military government teams found themselves operating within two separate chains of command while at the provincial level. The teams would receive reports from Hodge's headquarters concerning national policy as well as receiving orders from the tactical commanders. In order to encourage communication between the government teams and Arnold, Hodge established another layer of staff bureaucracy. The Provincial Affairs Section within the Secretariat was able to de-conflict orders that came down from either Hodge or the operational chain of command.⁶⁰ While this provided a temporary solution to a violation of unity of command, it slowed implementation of policy in a dynamic environment where speed was of the essence. Further, the speed of communication with the headquarters in Seoul presented an impediment to effective local governance that was complimentary to the national policies set forth by Hodge. The poor infrastructure and distance from the capital to outlying provinces continued to impede successful military governance in the critical first months of the occupation.

⁵⁸United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of the USAMGIK*, 27.

⁵⁹The 7th ID was the first tactical unit available with the XXIV Corps to accept the surrender of the Japanese and begin immediate occupation duties. Two additional infantry divisions (6th ID and 40th ID) would arrive shortly after the initial landing and assume similar missions.

⁶⁰Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 77.

Hodge vastly improved the lack of unity of command by issuing General Order No. 1 on 4 January 1946 and creating the United States Army Military Government in Korea.⁶¹ A week and a half later, control of the military government units passed from tactical commanders to the newly formed headquarters. While the lack of infrastructure and other communication issues still affected efficient operations, organizationally, the XXIV Corps had made a large stride in effectively controlling the civil administration of South Korea.⁶² The new organization and the freeing of tactical units set the conditions for successful governance over the next two years. Once the hand over from tactical to military governance was complete, the combat troops were able to support the civil governance with the desperately needed manpower for security duties and other tasks.

The integration of military governance and operational commanders did not always detract from mission accomplishment. At times, it allowed innovative combat commanders to develop operational approaches to problem sets within their provinces. These solutions to civil issues could then be socialized throughout the corps and passed to adjacent units and possibly adopted at the national level of government. An example would be the situation in Chulam province located at the southernmost tip of the Korean Peninsula. The directives from the national level were to retain Japanese officials until such time that USAFIK would direct the removal and the subsequent emplacement of Koreans into critical bureaus. Upon arrival into the Chulam province, members of the civil affairs group identified the necessity of removing the Japanese officials as soon as possible and replacing them with Korean citizens. By expediting this process, the US Army units within the province gained the trust of local citizens, as they were the first unit

⁶¹James Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War: Policy and Direction, the First Year* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1998), 13.

⁶²Phillip Taylor, "Military Government Experience in Korea," *American Government in Action: American Experiences in Military Government in World War II*, ed. Carl Friedrich (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1948), 362.

south of the 38th parallel to completely remove any vestige of Japanese rule. In fact, the tactic was so effective, that it was adopted nationwide by the USAMGIK later in the year.⁶³ While using tactical troops for military governance duties was not ideal, Hodge saw that the situation in Korea required such employment. Taken together, the usage of tactical troops was the only way to accomplish the specified tasks in BLACKLIST. Like many military operations at the time, the Soldiers were able to adapt to the unfamiliar situation and through ingenuity and initiative, make the operation successful.

Hindering his ability to tailor his approach to the Korea situation was the insistence by General MacArthur that Korea be treated in a similar manner as that of the Japanese occupation, the status of Korea as that of a quasi belligerent nation and the lack of training military governance personnel on the specifics of Korea.⁶⁴ This Korean/Japanese model for occupation from the SCAP staff and MacArthur was most problematic when it came to troop allocation for occupation duty. When Hodge asked for additional troops in September 1945, he received resistance from higher headquarters due to troop calculations for occupation duty. AFPAC had difficulty understanding that if a certain size force in Japan could ensure proper military governance, then an equal or lesser force would certainly be adequate in the non-belligerent country of Korea. Ironically, the size of the force should have been larger in Korea as there was not an existing governmental structure to assist the Allies as there was in Japan. The existing Japanese government allowed for an indirect occupational approach with fewer U.S. troops.⁶⁵ Hodge knew, from his limited experience in the country, there were fundamental differences

⁶³Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 60.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 59.

⁶⁵MAJ Lawrence E. Skelly III, "Enemies into Allies: American Stability Operations and Transformation of Japan 1945-1952" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2012), 18.

between the two people and that the troop ratio used in Japan would not work in Korea.⁶⁶ Adding to the tension between the headquarters, was the need to demobilize and send combat troops home to the United States as quickly as possible. Foremost in his mind was the strained relationship between the Korean civilians and the remaining Japanese troops and civilian administrators. He also saw the Russian presence in the northern portion of the country as another major factor in authorizing more troops in the country. The deterrent effect of having three full combat divisions would do well to keep the Soviets north of the 38th parallel and keep them from interfering in governance affairs within USAFIK's area of responsibility.⁶⁷

The level of control over the population was another difference between the Japanese and Korean governmental systems. The Japanese vested all control within the Emperor with provincial and local governments executing edicts and directives. The Koreans, on the other hand, while being subject to a similar system during Japanese occupation were intrinsically attracted to a more decentralized governmental organization. The failure of Hodge and his men to recognize this distinction led to long-term issues between the United States and Korea. The transition to nationalization and centralization in Seoul during the early phases of the occupation severely curtailed the ability of provincial governors to serve the constituency that elected them.⁶⁸ The governor merely existed in order to serve the national government in Seoul and was unable to enact legislation from the provincial level in order to deal with geographically specific issues. The structure of the USAGMIK only exacerbated this problem. Ironically, the Koreans were postured to establish a governmental system similar to that of a United States representative democracy.⁶⁹ AFPAC's centralization of policy led to a further centralization by the XXIV Corps

⁶⁶United States Army Forces in Korea, *History of The USAFIK*, Chapter 6, 30.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 234.

⁶⁹Ibid., 235.

and missed opportunity to establish an effective form of government focused on the provinces. This provincially focused approach was how the Koreans envisioned establishment of governmental control and was the most compatible for the culture and geography of the country. Unfortunately, American planners did not see it this way and the trust and friendship of the Korean people was the price that they paid. To successfully conduct his occupation, Hodge needed to convince his superiors that Korea was not Japan.

The XXIV Corps executed Field Order 55 with only two weeks of planning and preparation. The operation called for multiple phases of troop movements to allow for a rapid occupation to fill a military governance role in the event of a bureaucratic Japanese collapse. The reliance of the Korean people on government distribution of life sustaining support made the mission absolutely critical to a stable Korea, capable of self-governance. Although the corps relegated military governance to an annex in Field Order 55, it quickly became apparent that civil control and not the demobilization of the Japanese would be the decisive operation for BLACKLIST. Hodge's limited military governance assets led to innovative uses of tactical troops to fill that role. However, as he found out, employing troops in contradiction to current doctrine, causes a new set of problems and difficulties.

CONFLICTING POLITICAL STRATEGY

In addition to the lack of time and the military governance forces required to conduct a successful occupation, Hodge and his staff had to contend with the conflicting strategic political messaging both prior to and during the occupation of Korea. Political constraints are nothing new to military leaders, as there can be no war without governmental influence on how and what objectives the military achieves. In *On War*, Clausewitz explicitly talks about the trinity that exists in warfare. The people, the commander and his military and the government all interact in

concert with each other.⁷⁰ Warfare emerges from this unpredictable interaction of these variables. The point of Clausewitz's analogy is to illustrate how all three variables are dependent upon each other and create different forms of warfare that the military commander, who is not only responsible for creating, but also must therefore operate within - Hodge was that military commander. His approach to the "Korean problem" had to operate within the framework created by the three legs of Clausewitz's trinity. As they do with all commanders, the limited options he could take as a military force caused tension between the political strategic objectives of the United States, the ways available to him as the senior military commander in Korea and the means made available to conduct the mission. The strategic political friction points that the XXIV Corps had to deal with were the questions of a Soviet Trusteeship and the policies preventing him from establishing a new governing party for a free Korea.

Upon arrival into Korea, American troops found several de facto governments prepared for the eventuality of a free and independent state. If successful independence was the singular end to the occupation of Korea, the XXIV Corps already had a semi-functioning Korea government that could receive the US troops and assist them with the surrender and repatriation of Japanese troops and civilians. This, in fact was the experience when the Soviet XXVth Army when they occupied Korea north of the 38th parallel; they were greeted by a North Korean version of a de facto government and were in a supportive role of the civilian government.⁷¹ Of course, the Soviets had much better information regarding the political and social environment in North Korea, including exiles living within Russia and involvement in Communist political activities.⁷² Koreans had formed a Committee of Preparation for Korean Independence within South Korea on 15 August 1945. Within a month, multiple subsidiaries of this committee formed

⁷⁰Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89.

⁷¹Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 59.

⁷²Ibid., 58.

throughout all provinces and in nearly every major city within the country. The committee even had its own security force and an Army with a claimed strength of 15,000 personnel. Along with the security apparatus, its influence extended into labor unions and cooperative farming elements.⁷³ Representatives of the committee were on hand to greet Hodge when he first arrived in Korea. He was completely taken by surprise, as the little intelligence his staff was able to gather did not prepare him for this development. Hodge followed the orders in hand and made contact with the Japanese Governor-General and assumed control of South Korea.⁷⁴ The possibilities of this committee and how it could assist the XXIV Corps in their mission cannot be understated. Seemingly, the XXIV Corps had the solution to the daunting task that lay ahead. While civil affairs doctrine, at the time, explicitly warned commanders from recognizing de facto governmental organizations, Korea occupied a conceptual grey area between conquered enemy nation and allied state.⁷⁵ President Truman would make the final decision for Hodge as to whether or not to work with the de facto government poised to take over administrative control of the nation. On 18 September 1945, Truman issued a decree that rejected any notion of the idea that there would be immediate independence facilitated by the people of Korea. The process would be deliberate and “will of necessity require time and patience.”⁷⁶ The amount of confusion and mistrust this caused between the military government and the Korean people had a detrimental effect on the mission. Additionally, Hodge spent most of the remaining months of 1945 attempting to explain the decision by his political leaders and the resulting contradictions in the American approach to a free and independent nation:

The Americans and the Military Government of Korea are not in the business of quarrelling with or suppressing political parties or beliefs. We believe implicitly in the

⁷³Millett, 45.

⁷⁴Meade, *American Military Government in Korea* 59.

⁷⁵FM 27-5, 7.

⁷⁶Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 60.

freedom of political beliefs and have no desire and no intention or aim to suppress or in any way hamper the legitimate political activities of any party.⁷⁷

Hodge continues his address:

I have today directed my occupation forces and the Military Government of Korea that the activities of any political organization in any attempted operation as a government are to be treated as unlawful activities.⁷⁸

The decision by political leadership, nearly 6,000 miles away, to disregard political parties and de facto governmental organizations further constrained Hodge and his approach to occupying the peninsula and made many of his tactical successes within the provinces less effective as he could not capitalize on them to make for more strategic progress.

In comparison to the XXIV Corps, the Soviet XXVth Army operated with little concern for political and strategic tensions in Moscow or elsewhere. They only had one template to use for occupation and that was sovietization of Northern Korea and dealing with the unification of the peninsula at a future date (1950 as it turns out).⁷⁹ The Soviet approach was one of control and leverage of existing political institutions, characterized by the shaping operations that occurred since the early 1940s. Most critically, the Soviets decided upon a political leader that was supportive of their political and military objectives. The Soviets established Ki Il-Sung as the legitimate political leader in Pyongyang almost immediately after the surrender of the Japanese. Il-Sung operated in close concert with the Soviets in order to establish control and begin the march towards communist rule over the entire peninsula.⁸⁰ It is not to suggest that the United States Government would have benefited from employing the tactics of an oppressive Soviet

⁷⁷LTG John R. Hodge, "Statement from the Commanding General, USAFIK," 12 December 1945, *Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, and United Nations Command, General Correspondence 1943-46*, RG 554, (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1945), Box 1.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Spector, 146.

⁸⁰Ibid., 147-148.

regime, but an approach of selecting a political leader for a newly liberated country to serve as the embodiment for unification and control, would have assisted Hodge with his tasks. While MacArthur gave Hodge seemingly limitless power to conduct his governance mission in Korea, the one thing that he was missing was establishing the “foundation for a Korean national government” and appointing a leader of such a national government early in the occupation would have been effective.⁸¹ This was not possible as the U.S. State Department informed both Hodge and his political advisors that the two exiled leaders of the Korean provisional government, Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku, in the United States and China, respectively would return and bring unity amongst the multitude of political parties and factions.⁸²

The establishment of a Joint Trusteeship to control Korea until such time that unification could be achieved was also a source of difficulty for Hodge and his staff. The idea of a Soviet-American trusteeship was antithetical to both the American military personnel and the South Korean political leaders. The presence of the Soviets north of the 38th parallel precipitated the decision by political leaders in Washington to join mainly with the Soviets to delay independence of the Koreans and work towards unification. The Moscow Conference in December 1945, took independence out of the hands of Koreans and gave responsibility to the two senior military American and Soviet commanders. Koreans were to be consulted, but committee would ultimately decide any and all decisions for the organization of a provisional Korean democratic government.⁸³ While “Great Power” rule was seen as a politically expedient “exit strategy” for the Korean situation, the reality was much different.⁸⁴ During the first meeting of the two commands in January 1946, it became very clear to Hodge and his political advisors that the

⁸¹Millet, *The War For Korea*, 60.

⁸²Spector, 159.

⁸³Department of State, *Korea, 1945-1948: A Report on Political Developments*, 3.

⁸⁴Spector, 166.

Soviets did not see the trusteeship as a vehicle to achieve a unified and independent Korea. The Soviets saw the political issues at hand as too broad and instead stymied the progress of the commission by focusing on narrow economic and agricultural issues.⁸⁵ Through this political turmoil, Hodge recognized how it was affecting not only the people of Korea, but also the efforts of his organization to move toward the goal of independence. Hodge was stuck in between the proverbial rock and a hard place. He had worked tirelessly to gain the trust of the seemingly countless political organizations throughout South Korea, but he was unable to deliver on the promise of independence due to domestic and international political constraints. Even more detrimental, was that indirect relationship that existed between the time and ability of the South Koreans to self govern. The longer the United State relied on the joint commission to reach independence; the Koreans would be in a less advantageous position to effectively govern themselves if, and when it was achieved⁸⁶.

Like any other commander throughout the history of warfare, the domestic and international political realities framed Hodges' operating environment. At times throughout the occupation, it appeared to Hodge that the ends and his means were misaligned. When engaged in combat against the enemy in Okinawa, political considerations were not a paramount concern. During a military governance mission, Hodge found that the domestic political environment had a detrimental effect on his ability to stabilize South Korea and move them forward on a path to independence.

CONCLUSION

The occupation of Korea by the XXIV Corps provides an excellent case study for current United States Department of Defense leaders conducting stability operations. Unlike the Japanese

⁸⁵Department of State, *Korea, 1945-1948: A Report on Political Developments*, 5.

⁸⁶Spector, 166.

occupation, Korea presented a conceptual grey area for Hodge, much like the situations faced by U.S. ground forces today. Korea was not a truly occupied nation; it was a quasi-belligerent one that necessitated a delicate balance between planning, available resources and strategic guidance by political leaders. The lack of planning time available presented interesting challenges to the XXIV Corps Staff. In spite of operating in the Pacific for almost five years, the U.S. War Department had little intelligence on the situation on the Korean peninsula. Understandably, Japan captured the attention of the Allies, which gave minimal thought to a post war Korea. Logistically, the corps faced immense issues with movement of troops onto the peninsula. The inability to mass forces early and decisively worried Hodge and his advisors throughout the duration of 1945.

The lack of civil affairs assets to properly execute military governance was a major impediment to the occupation mission; Hodge created civil affairs teams from his combat formations to achieve his objectives. The Military Government School in Virginia did not sufficiently train these men and most did not have the skills to conduct military governance in a complex post-war environment- especially Korea. Hodge selected these men based on their civilian expertise and experience, as most were not professional Soldiers. Their experiences before World War II would assist them with their new duties as military governors. This use of combat troops in a civil affairs role created a chain of command problem for Hodge during the critical first months of the occupation. Civil affairs assets found themselves answering to multiple chains of command and at times executing conflicting orders. It was not until the establishment of the United States Army Military Government in Korea in 1946 that the complex chain of command issues were finally resolved. Hodge was also unable to implement a Korea specific governance strategy for the occupation. The insistence by GHQ, SCAP to treat Korea in a similar manner as Japan needlessly handicapped Hodge. MacArthur's monolithic view of Asian politics did not see the distinct differences between the two countries.

Finally, Hodge had to deal with the conflicting strategic guidance from the U.S. political leadership and the SCAP. The Allies declared outright or inferred that Korea would be a free and independent nation multiple times before the surrender of Japan. The Korean people and the military commanders responsible for the occupation and governance of the peninsula received their message. It shaped the way in which both the Koreans and the U.S. military leadership envisioned the execution of BLACKLIST. Unfortunately, the political realities led to multiple changes in the approach to BLACKLIST, causing operational setbacks and frustration amongst the population. The larger geopolitical situation was exacerbated by a lack of an understanding of the political, social and economic situation on the peninsula. Hodge found himself unable to choose an approach that would lead to a rapid independence for Korea, as it would not align with political objectives of a complicated alliance between the U.S. and Soviets. Despite stated policy, the U.S. did not support true self-determination for Korea. It adopted the Japanese model in a country that had not been a belligerent of the Allies.

Operational and strategic leaders can learn much from the experiences of the XXIV Corps and their mission of occupying Korea following World War II. By studying the planning process and the employment of civil military assets during BLACKLIST, one can begin to understand the magnitude of the tasks that await them. Employing a force organized to conduct combat operations in a nation building capacity remains as difficult today as it did over 60 years ago. As it was back then, the answer of handing over governance to a “civil affairs” element does not reflect the reality of the situation. Conventional US forces will continue to conduct governance to some degree while deployed in a combat role. The US Army is expected to “fight and win the nation’s wars” with the implied task being winning the peace as well.

Counter Insurgency (COIN) and Stability Operations have been in the spotlight over the last decade when it comes to doctrinal development, training and equipping the current military

forces (specifically the Army and Marine Corps) of the United States.⁸⁷⁸⁸ COIN doctrine calls for Soldiers and Marines to be “nation builders, as well as warriors.”⁸⁹ The nation-building role that the U.S. Armed Forces assume is precisely what the Soldiers of the XXIV Corps faced in 1945. The transition from major combat operations to military governance is a monumentally important task that should not be conducted by a tactical unit that lacks the training and expertise.⁹⁰ Manpower reductions in the active force will only worsen the problem. The current Quadrennial Defense Review states that a smaller United States Army due to fiscal constraints will need to “be capable of conducting a wide spectrum of operations,” and “sustained land combat ... including post-conflict stability operations that transform battlefield victories into enduring security and prosperity.”⁹¹ Despite having the largest ground force that the U.S. had ever seen (or seen since), there were not enough men with a specific skill set to effectively occupy Korea. The leaner force of the future will no doubt have similar issues during the post-conflict phase of the next inevitable combat operation. The desire to refocus the Army on major combat operations comes at a cost, as the core competencies described in ADRP 3-0 is a zero sum proposal. A military unit can be proficient in Combined Arms Maneuver and Wide Area Security, but it is difficult to perform both well.⁹²

⁸⁷Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 26 December 2006).

⁸⁸Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-07, *Stability* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 31 August 2012), 2-11.

⁸⁹FM 3-24, Foreword.

⁹⁰John A. Nagl. “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps,” *The Future of the U.S. Military Series* (June 2007), http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/Nagl_AdvisoryCorp_June07.pdf (accessed 24 March 2014).

⁹¹Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 2014), 29.

⁹²Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3.0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 2-1.

The composition of the professional force today also compounds the difficulties of tactical troops conducting military governance. While the Soldiers of previous conflicts had a breadth and depth of civilian skills, many of the men and women of today's Army have known only the profession of arms. The flexibility given to commanders, such as Hodge, of having men who were not professional Soldiers under his charge did much to fill the resource shortfalls found in the absence of military governance troops. While the National Guard and Reserve components of today's Army provide a limited capability, the small force approach to operations as evidenced by the Rumsfeld Doctrine of the 2000's may not make those Soldiers available when they are needed the most; during the immediate collapse of the belligerent government.⁹³

The current state of civil affairs personnel today is inadequate for the missions that the conventional forces are asked to do at the conclusion of combat operations. The shortfall was just as evident during the post-conflict operations in Iraq as it was during the military governance operations in the Pacific in 1945. A smaller active duty civil affairs force means that specialization is not efficient or even possible. Special skills such as language expertise and cultural knowledge are lacking in the today's active duty civil affairs force.⁹⁴ The lack of regional experts within the civil affairs formations today lead to the same issues that Hodge faced as he could not employ Korean experts during the critical few months of the occupation. An increase in civil affairs personnel in the active duty force would free combat commanders from focusing on post conflict tasks during the execution of high intensity conflict.

As the experience of the US Army in World War II has shown, awaiting a military force

⁹³Robert Haddick, "This Week at War: Rumsfeld's Revenge," *Foreign Policy* (8 July 2011): 1, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/07/08/this_week_at_war_rumsfeld_s_revenge (accessed 21 March 2014).

⁹⁴William Florig, "Theater Civil Affairs Soldiers: A Force at Risk," *Joint Force Quarterly* 43 (4th quarter 2006): 1, http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume5/may_2007/5_07_2.html (accessed 21 March 2014).

at the end of a major conflict is a period of stability operations and some degree of military governance.⁹⁵ In the case of the XXIV Corps, operational level planning for such a mission is not to be left for two weeks prior to the execution. Further, assuming that military governance troops will bear the brunt of military governance tasks is a fallacy and will lead to ad hoc organizations that are not trained or equipped to handle such politically delicate and critical tasks. Adding to the criticality of a well-executed military governance mission following major combat operations is the inevitable power vacuum that exists after the defeat of an adversarial regime. Generally, the U.S. military conducts combat operations against countries that have installed autocratic totalitarian regimes in order to control their people. These regimes exercise this control by centralizing power and controlling the distribution of necessary goods and services to the populace. A legitimate authority must conduct these tasks as soon as possible in order to ensure stability and set the conditions for the establishment of a governmental system that is conducive to the interests of the United States. By employing a government force, combat commanders would not focus on post conflict operations while they are engaged in combat with the enemy. Allowing a stability force with the requisite experience and expertise to analyze the predicted post conflict situation would lead to better employment of a scarce resource. Taken together, having two smaller forces conduct specified tasks will take less national resources than having one larger force conduct the entire range of combat operations.

The mission of the United States Army remains as it has always been, “To fight and win our nation’s wars.” The meaning of that mission has changed drastically over the last century and will continue to do so. “Winning a war” no longer focuses on the defeat of the enemy, but the establishment of a functioning society to replace the belligerent that was defeated in combat. In fact, in times of limited war, one could argue that “winning the peace” is just as important as

⁹⁵MAJ Gregory Roden, “Occupation and Governance: The New Face of Operational Art” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2006), 42.

defeating your enemy. The transition after combat is one rife with danger and complexities. Using our combat forces to transition from destroying the enemy to maintaining peace and setting the conditions for democracy, while possible, remains as difficult today as it was in Korea in the post World War II period.

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